



Buddy Team Assignment Program (BTAP) Evaluation

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BTAP Overview

- The Buddy Team Assignment Program (BTAP):
 - Pairs soldiers at the beginning of OSUT
 - Keeps the pairs intact through the initial months at their First Duty Station assignment.
 - Extends the Battle Buddy concept, which paired soldiers in only OSUT
- Program Rationale:
 - Initial assignments cause significant stress for soldiers
 - During the initial months at the first duty station, soldier perceptions of the Army as a career begin to solidify.
 - Buddy Team members will provide mutual support
- Program Goal:
 - Reduce attrition
 - Increase satisfaction with training and initial assignment
 - Improve first term reenlistment intent.



BTAP Overview

- Evaluation Goal:
 - Determine if the program is being implemented effectively.
 - Assess the impact of BTAP on soldier satisfaction during training and initial assignment.
 - Quantify impact of program on attrition and career intentions.



BTAP Evaluation Method

- Developed multiple surveys
 - End of OSUT survey for all Infantry 11Ms (1 Questionnaire)
 - First Duty Station for soldiers in BTAP and a sample of 11Ms who were designated as “Controls” during OSUT (2 Questionnaires)
- Surveys were similar and covered...
 - Background
 - Personal characteristics
 - Self ratings
 - Ratings of battle buddy/buddy team member/closest friend
 - Responsibility for buddy/friend’s success
 - Impact of buddy/friend on respondent
 - Unit and leadership ratings
 - Outcome variables
- Questionnaires differed in asking respondents to rate buddy team member / battle buddy/closest friend on various dimensions:

Survey Time Frame	Control Group	Buddy Team Group
OSUT	Traditional Battle Buddies	Buddy Team Members
First Duty Station	Closest Friend in Unit	Buddy Team Members



BTAP Evaluation Method

➤ Method:

- End-of-Training data collected from graduating 11M classes (April through July 2001; $n = 964$).
- First Duty Station data were collected from 214 BTAP soldiers and 207 control soldiers



BTAP Evaluation: Training Company Results

- Program Endorsement data
 - One-half to two-thirds of respondents indicated their battle buddy had a positive or very positive effect on them on motivational dimensions.
 - 85% reported they were at least somewhat responsible for their battle buddies success.
 - 94% reported they helped their battle buddy at least somewhat.
 - 44% reported spending “some” or “a great deal of time” helping their battle buddy
- Analyses indicated a positive relationship between liking for battle buddy and morale.
- Analyses showed a positive relationship between liking for battle buddy and opinions about BTAP.



BTAP Evaluation: First Duty Station Program Implementation

- BTAP soldiers were to be assigned to the same company. 128 of the 214 BTAP respondents (60%) indicated they were assigned with their OSUT battle buddy as follows:
 - 17% at the same squad.
 - 25% at the same platoon.
 - 20% at the same company.
 - 25% at the same battalion.
 - 13% gave another response.



BTAP Evaluation: First Duty Station Impact Results

- Analyses could not demonstrate BTAP reduced attrition because BTAP and control groups had very low attrition rates presumably due to Army attrition initiatives unrelated to BTAP.
- BTAP participants and other soldiers generally support the program:
 - 60% of BTAP participants endorsed the program (29% were neutral)
 - 34% of controls endorsed the program (42% were neutral)
 - 26-50% of Buddy Team members indicated their buddies had a positive impact on them on dimensions such as confidence, motivation, adjustment, etc.
 - 52% felt at least somewhat responsible for their buddy's success
 - 71% said they helped their buddy at least somewhat
 - One-quarter to one-half indicated that their buddy had a positive influence on them, depending on the particular dimension.
 - BTAP participant dimension endorsements approximated those for Best Friend ratings.



BTAP Evaluation: Program Effectiveness Results

- Conditions supporting program effectiveness:
 - BTAP participants who liked their buddy reported higher morale
 - Analyses associate greater Buddy Team satisfaction with the amount of Buddy Team interaction
 - Buddy Team interactions greater when:
 - Members are assigned at the lower levels (squad/platoon)
 - Members report liking each other
- Qualitative reasons given by participants in support of BTAP included:
 - Eases transition to the unit

"It's good to have someone you know and trust with you. I trust my battle buddy more than most soldiers at this post. He is always there for me. And I am there for him."
 - Buddies motivate and help one another

"I agree because it is good for someone to have someone else to know when you are going somewhere you know nothing about. It is also good to have a buddy there to talk to or to ask for help if you may need it."



BTAP Evaluation--Recommendations

- Continue BTAP. The data suggest BTAP provides soldiers needed support during training.
- Provide administrative measures to help keep Buddy Teams intact. Nearly half of respondents (46%) had more than one buddy during OSUT.
- Pair soldiers based on characteristics (e.g., interests) to improve buddy compatibility.
- Assign buddies to the lowest possible unit.